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NEWS RELEASE

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Lovingood concerned by Feinstein bill



San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Robert A. Lovingood said he has reservations about new legislation that would further expand the 11,000-square-mile footprint established by Sen. Dianne Feinstein's 1994 desert bill.

"Some components of the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015 (CDCRA) have merit, but all in all, the bill has too many unintended consequences and will harm local jobs, our economy and hinder the historic multiple-use approach to our public lands," Lovingood said.

The 1994 bill extended control over 11,875 square miles of desert. The new proposal would cover 2,200 square miles. A new National Park Service report shows that the three areas covered by the 1994 bill (Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve) have a backlog of more than \$351 million in deferred maintenance and needed repairs to roads, bridges, trails and other infrastructure.

"Since the federal government is not taking good care of what it currently has, it doesn't make sense for them to take over even more," Lovingood said. He added that the federal government already owns 80 percent of the lands in San Bernardino County, costing the County more than \$15 million in lost property taxes.

As part of the multiple-use approach, Lovingood said he supports stand-alone legislation that would legally protect five existing OHV areas including El Mirage, Johnson Valley and Dumont Dunes. Some of the lands under the CDCRA would be off limits to development, mining, off-roading, grazing and military training.

San Bernardino County has world-class mining reserves, Lovingood said. So as the federal government transfers more land from multiple use to non-use, it reduces job opportunities now and in the future. Currently, federal permitting backlogs are holding back an estimated 400 to 500 local mining and support jobs. Permanently sealing off strategic rare earth elements also has implications for national security and new technologies.

"I look forward to working with Congressman Paul Cook and my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors on alternatives that won't hamstring our economy and will promote the multiple-use approach to our desert," Lovingood said.

NPS Deferred Maintenance by State and by Park, Sept. 30, 2014

http://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY14-DM-by-State-and-Park_2015-03-13.pdf